



CONGLOM : RESEARCH

TIMETABLING FOR RELATIONSHIPS

“It is widely believed that personal relationships with children afford teachers internal rewards and give meaning to their work.”

TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

Teacher-student relationships, like most community groups are reciprocal; and rely on a mutual foundation of trust and closeness to be beneficial in an educational institution. The general tendency to think of ‘teachers act and students respond’ is based largely on the archaic perception that classrooms are controlled by the teacher.

RESEARCH INSIGHTS

Several studies and research all indicate that positive student teacher relations have an impact on students, in both academic and social spheres. Interestingly, recent research also shows that students have considerable influence over teacher behavior as well! The following data is from a wide variety of sources that substantiate the practices and processes within the **Curriculum, Community and Parent Partnership Pillars**.

Student teacher relationship is also crucial to the sense of school belonging for adolescents. In fact, the relationship that students have with teachers is the most **important predictive variable** to influence a student’s sense of belonging to a school, being more important than other key variables such as sense of community, peer relationships and even family involvement in school. This has several implications when it comes to classroom practice, but also teacher parent conversations.

Developing a space of commonality and trust becomes equally as important as effective pedagogy and instruction.¹

The nature of the student-teacher relationship changes through the primary, middle and secondary school. However, there are common elements that are necessary for a healthy, positive classroom:

- Students need to feel that the teachers are **involved** in them: That they care about the child as an individual
- Students should feel that they are respected as individuals, and can **influence & impact** decisions that affect them²

- Students need a clear **framework** within which they can take these decisions: this introduces an element of predictability, which is important to help them feel secure – some of these can be measured through established questionnaires like the TSRQ (Teacher-Student Relationship Quality)³

Perhaps what is surprising is that, research has clearly demonstrated that poor student-teacher relationships (the students think the teacher does not support them; teacher feels a student is 'bad' and 'is a problem-child') during early schooling can affect a student's performance across even in middle school! The permanence of a good relationship with teachers in school also has an impact in college.

Most teacher-student relationships are typically defined under the closeness – conflict dynamic. There are many ways to assess the effectiveness of the conflict-close relationship as there are a plethora of assessments and rubrics available for all age groups. In one study, researchers used **drawings of the classroom** as a means of providing a range of important data on the quality and strength of the relationship from as young as pre-school.

Students were asked to draw their classroom; and based on the distance between the child and teacher, the accuracy of representation and cohesion, depiction of the blackboard and other metrics, students can express themselves without having to speak or use surveys.⁴

HOW DOES IT AFFECT TEACHERS?

"It is widely believed that personal relationships with children afford teachers internal rewards and give meaning to their work."⁵

The reciprocal nature of any relationship has **observable** and **measurable** outcomes on teacher wellbeing. Teachers routinely cite student teacher relationships as one of the main reasons for continuing with the profession. It is also clear that maintaining good, positive relationships with students in high school gradually becomes **challenging** – due to time constraints, subject isolation and the changing psychological / physiological profile of students. The disconnect and alienation that teachers feel in the higher grades makes it increasingly important to restore the relationship by actively **timetabling** for relationship-building.⁶

CONGLOM : IN A NUTSHELL

Research has shown that, in addition to the quality of a teacher's content knowledge, the nature of their relationship also has a significant impact on student academic outcome. It has now been established that:

- Students are more likely to be **engaged & interested** in the class session if they feel the teacher cares for them as individuals.
- A classroom where the students share a positive relationship with the teacher is likely to experience less **behaviour & discipline** issues.
- Based on **Attachment theory**, the student-teacher relationship acts like a supportive role and substitution to the mother-child relationship in shaping youth outcomes.⁷
- There is a **reciprocal** impact through positive student-teacher relationships through **role-modelling**.⁸
- Several longitudinal studies have indicated that prolonged positive '**closeness**' with teachers early on have long term impact in relationship building and achievements in school particularly in **Math and Reading**.^{9,10}

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